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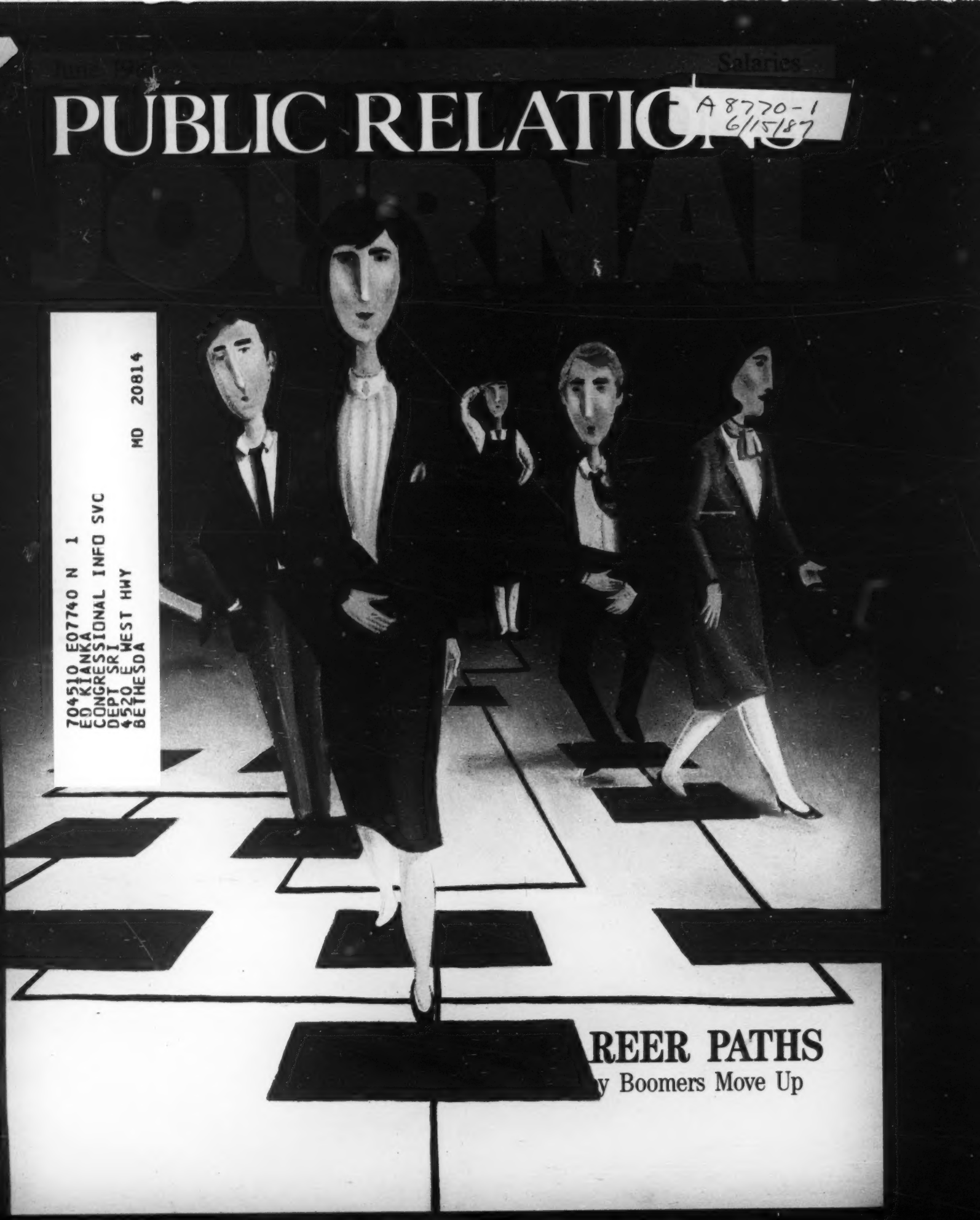

REER PATHS

y Boomers Move Up

PUBLIC RELATIONS JOURNAL

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Are men's salaries in public relations higher than women's—or is it a function of age, experience, and position? Do rising salaries in the field flatten out after age 35? *PRJ*'s annual review from Questionnaire results and comparative data. *By John C. Pollock and Michael Winkleman*

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SALARY SURVEY

by John C. Pollock and Michael Winkleman

Editor's note: *The survey from which the following results were drawn was conducted as an insert poll in the January 1987 issue of* PRJ. *Respondents were self-selected readers who chose to fill in the Questionnaire and mail it back. The results are not necessarily representative of the universe of public relations professionals but offer insights into trends in the field and, in many cases, correlate well with data drawn from other formal studies.*

Though men continued to earn a higher median salary than women in public relations last year, with the median salary for male *PRJ* Questionnaire respondents coming in $17,000, or 65 percent, higher than for female respondents ($48,000 compared to $31,000), a closer look reveals that much of this disparity can be attributed to the fact that female respondents are, on average, younger and have logged far fewer years in the field. A corollary to this is that a growing percentage of younger practitioners are women, a fact not unique to public relations but found increasingly in all other professions.

Other results of the *PRJ* poll indicate that though salaries for responding practitioners seem to grow quickly during their first 10 to 15 years in the field, or until about age 35, salaries tend to level off, growing only incrementally, on average, over the next 20 years. Perhaps related to this flattening of the salary curve is the predominant impression among responding practitioners that public relations is not as well paid as other professions—a perception that may not jibe with reality.

The 328 respondents to the Questionnaire are 55 percent female, come from every region of the U.S. and Canada, and represent most areas of specialty, with media relations, publicity, special events, corporate communications, marketing, and community relations most prominent.

The median age of male respondents is 42, compared to 33 for women. Two-thirds of male respondents have worked in the field for more than 10 years, while more than two-thirds of women have been in the field for less than 10 years. More than half of male respondents who work for counseling firms are officers or partners (only 13 percent of women are), but one-third of female respondents are account or junior account executives (only 15 percent of men are). Moreover, 84 percent of female respondents have been in their present positions for less than five years, while more than a third of men have held their current positions for more than five years. And, while male and female respondents show up in relatively equal percentages in most areas of practice, men are more evident in public affairs (38 percent compared to 19 percent) and women are more evident in special events (50 percent compared to 35 percent).

So while the median salary for male respondents is higher, the meaning of this median is thrown off by the preponderance of men in the older age groups and higher-paid positions and of women in the younger age groups and lower-paid positions. This finding mirrors last year's *PRJ* study and correlates well with the annual salary survey published by *pr reporter* in late 1986. *Pr reporter*'s survey shows a me-

BALANCE SHEET

Other data emerging from the *PRJ* Questionnaire on salaries reveal that among respondents:

- 60 percent work in departments or firms with one to four professionals.
- 24 percent work in project management, 36 percent in department management, and 18 percent in corporate management. However, 26 percent of men work in corporate management and 73 percent of women work in project or department management.
- 54 percent report to corporate management or the board of directors.
- 45 percent have done graduate work.
- 18 percent work for counseling firms.

dian salary gender gap of $14,500 and finds that more than half of its respondents under 40 years of age are women and more than half of those over 40 are men. The newsletter finds salary gender gaps in each age group (*PRJ*'s sample was too small to determine that with any significance)—small gaps below age 35 that grow considerably wider after that point: In *pr reporter*'s study, men between ages 25 and 29 earn 5.7 percent more than women their age and men between ages 50 and 59 earn a striking 43 percent more than women their age. However, in a ratio similar to that found in *PRJ*'s study, 63 percent of *pr reporter*'s respondents between 25 and 29 are women while 75 percent of its respondents between 50 and 59 are men, another indication of the increasing number and percentage of women in the field—up 2.6 percent (to 42.6 percent) from *prr*'s 1985 study. In addition, this finding appears to indicate that the salary gender gap may be primarily a function of age and experience.

In terms of peaking salaries, *PRJ* respondents indicate relatively large jumps in median salaries up to age 35—with median salaries rising from $25,000 between ages 25 and 29 to $43,000 between ages 35 to 39. However, the median salaries of responding practitioners in their 40s and early 50s are also in the mid-$40,000 range, indicating that after a certain age and level of experience—generally about 15 years in the field, according to this survey—salaries level off and increase only incrementally. The median salary increase among all *PRJ* respondents between 1985 and 1986 is 5.7 percent. This is down from 9.3 percent in *PRJ*'s 1985 poll, but in line with the decrease the Conference Board reports in salary increases for all professionals: from 6.0 last year to 5.5 this year.

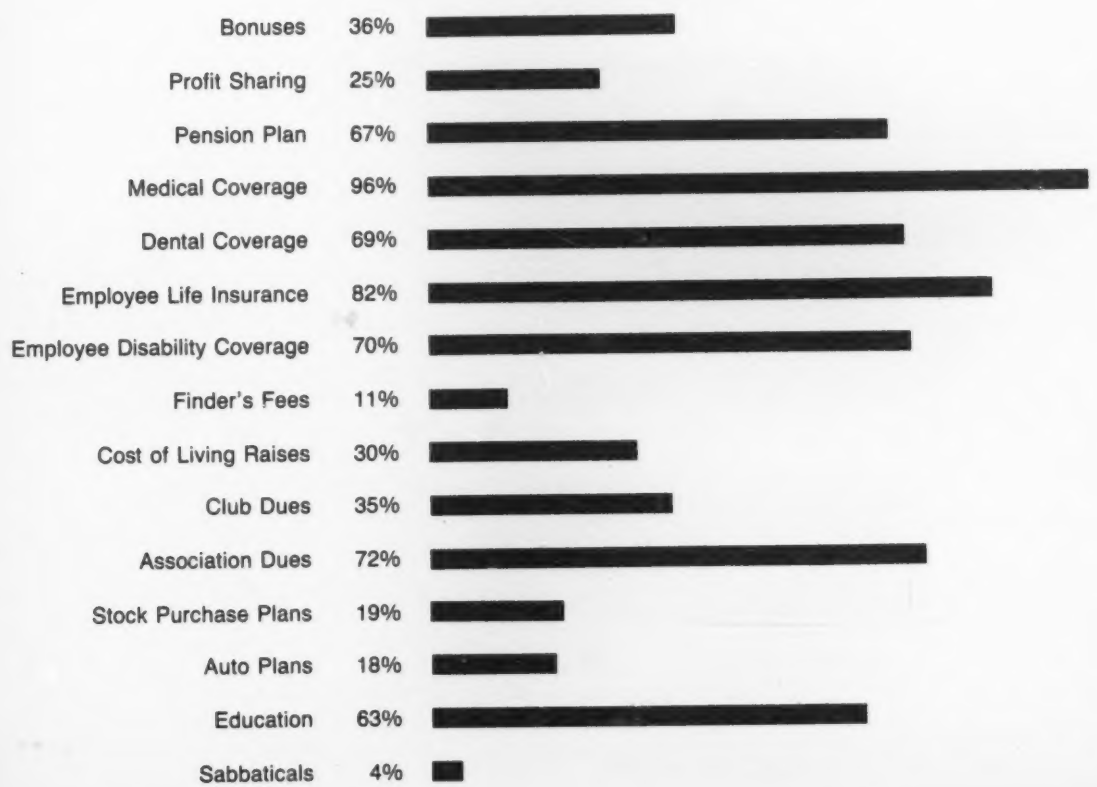
The appearance of this leveling-off process may help explain the appearance of another attitude: two-thirds of respondents believe salaries in public relations are somewhat or much lower than salaries in other professions. No respondents say they are much higher.

Finally, the benefits and perks that most respondents say they receive are most likely to cluster in the areas of health and medical care (medical coverage, life insurance, disability coverage, and dental coverage) and in professional development (association dues, education benefits). Far fewer say they receive profit sharing, stock purchase plans, auto plans, finder's fees, and sabbaticals. ■

John C. Pollock, Ph.D., is president of New World Decisions, Inc., a public relations opinion research firm in New Jersey. Michael Winkleman is editor of PRJ.

BENEFITS

Health insurance and professional development are the leading benefits reported by *PRJ* Questionnaire respondents.



MIRROR IMAGES

Female respondents are younger, have been in the field for fewer years, and, consequently, earn less.

Female Respondents

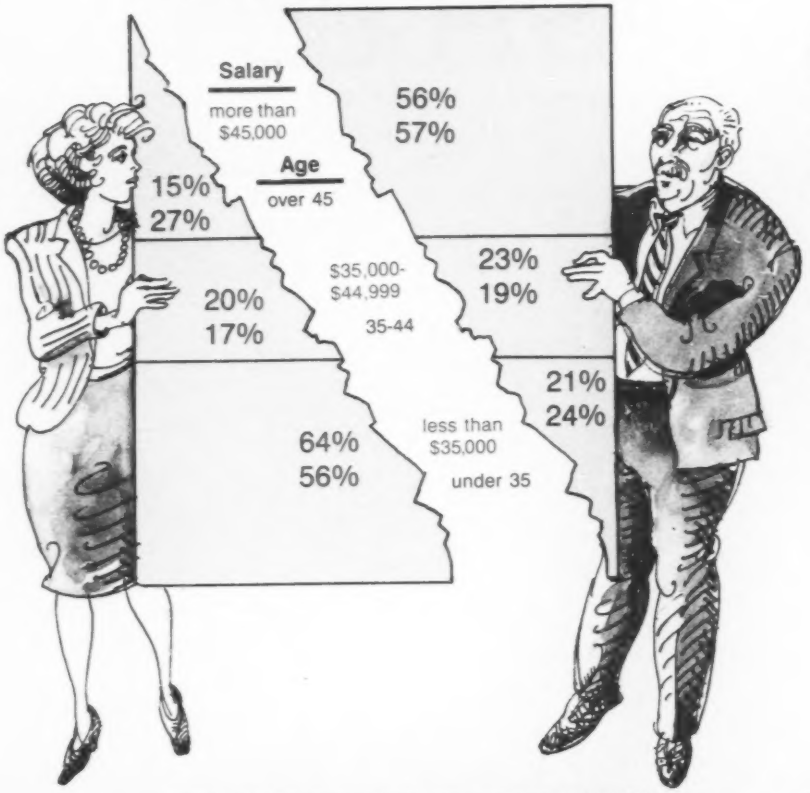
Median 1986 salary $31,000

70% in public relations *less than* 10 years

19% do public affairs

50% do special events

14% Accredited*



Male Respondents

Median 1986 salary $48,000

67% in public relations *more than* 10 years

38% do public affairs

35% do special events

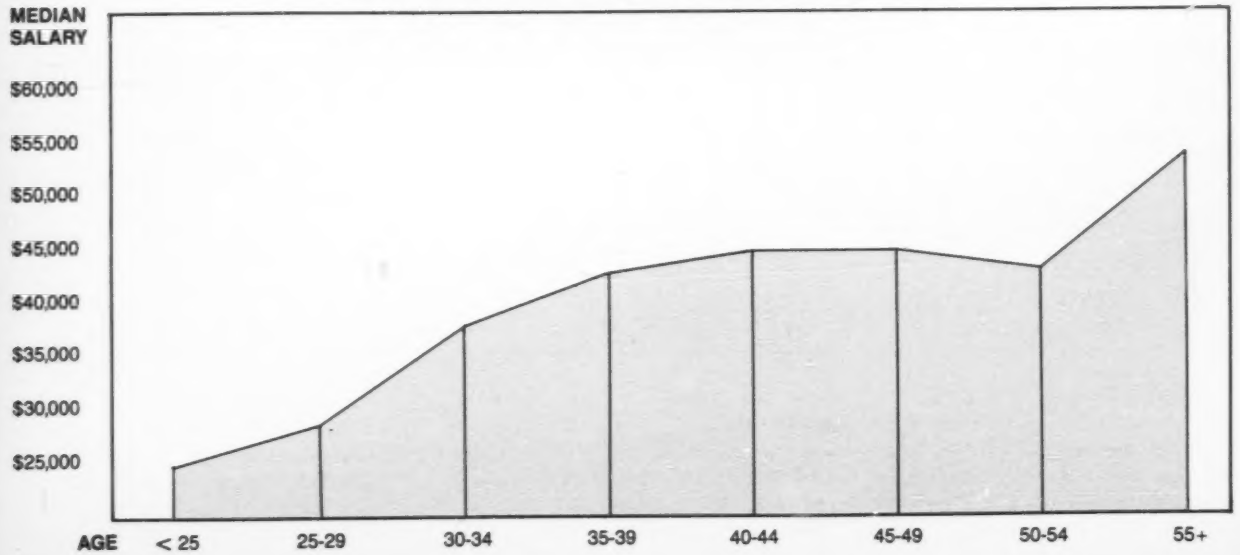
39% Accredited*

*85% of total respondents are members of PRSA

Illustration by Yvonne Buchanan

LEVELING OFF

After age 35, and a salary level in the $45,000 range, respondents report less dramatic increases in compensation.



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